

## Washing the White House

WHITE paint was formerly an important item in the cost of the up-keep of the White House. The mansion received a fresh coat two or three times a year, and eventually it came about that there was an extremely thick layer of paint all over it. To the pillars of the portico in front a perceptible accretion of diameter was contributed in the course of eighty years or so.

But when soon after the incoming of the Roosevelt administration the establishment underwent a thorough renovation and reconstruction: all of this accumulated paint was melted and scoured off by means of a flame-blast, exposing to view the original brown sandstone. Then a fresh coat of white was put on, and the edifice, which might originally have been called the Brown House, became once more, in appearance as well as in name, the White House.

Since that time a new policy has been adopted in the treatment of the mansion. It is painted only at long intervals, and instead of a fresh coat of white, it gets a thorough washing with soap and water, applied with scrubbing-brushes, every now and then.

It will be remembered that when the British invaders set fire to the executive residence in 1814, it was so marked by the flames that Madison, when it had undergone repairs, directed that it be painted white. Thus it acquired its present name—a title so obviously preferable to the stilted "Executive Mansion" that Roosevelt, when he came to occupy it, destroyed the entire stock of official stationery on hand and ordered a fresh supply, bearing, in plainest of letters, the good old address of our Presidents: "White House, Washington."

## WORLD'S BIGGEST MUSHROOMS

A MUSHROOM measuring five feet and one inch in circumference was found recently at Purdy Station, New-York, and is now in the possession of the Plant Bureau at Washington. It is a foot and a half in diameter.

This is the largest specimen that has been seen by the Government experts up to date, though mushrooms of the kind, belonging to the Puffball family, are often of great size. Partly by reason of their bigness, they would be profitable to cultivate, and attempts in this direction are even now being made. Doubtless before long land cultures will be obtained from them (by introducing bits of the fungus into flasks of sterilized compost, in which the mycelium quickly develops), and a spawn will thus be produced for planting.

It is said that if one finds a puffball in his back yard he may, by cutting a slice from it carefully every day, have a nice dish for breakfast each morning for a week. A sharp knife must be used, however, care being taken not to disturb the mushroom more than is necessary. As long as the interior is perfectly white the puffball is good to eat, but if the slightest yellow tinge shows it should be rejected. The yellowness proves that it is too old, and though not poisonous in such a condition, it is indigestible and likely to give one a pain.

The puffballs are among the most delicious of all mushrooms. When the requisite spawn has been obtained, it will be practicable to grow them in beds like any other agaries; and if placed on the market as a cultivated crop, people are pretty sure to learn to appreciate them. Cut in slices and fried in batter, they are exceedingly palatable.

## A Valentine

By Nixon Waterman

Did I pay postage on the love, dear friend,

That hides in these four halting lines, you'd see

'Twould take ten thousand postage-stamps to send

This precious valentine from me to thee.

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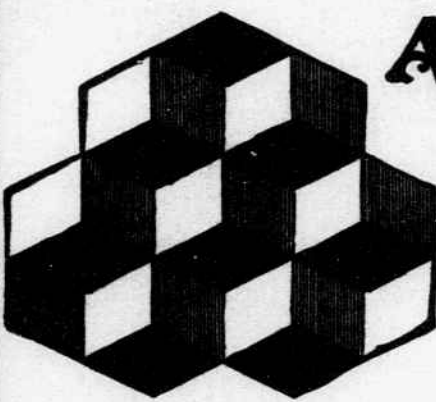
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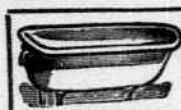
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## Novelties of Recent Invention

TWO interesting new inventions are a match and a bottle. The former is noiseless and should be a great help to burglars. On the end of an ordinary chlorate friction match is put a little tip of phosphorus compound, which gives ignition without sound. In fact, one might scratch a boxful of these matches one after another close to the ear of a sleeping person without there being the slightest danger of disturbing him by the noise.

In the sick-room such a match would be useful, avoiding danger of waking the patient. But these matches are on the point of appearing on the market, an announcement likewise applicable to the bottle referred to, which seems to solve the long-puzzling problem of the non-refillable receptacle.

Hundreds of inventors have patented non-refillable bottles, many of which are meritorious. The objection to them lies in the fact that they cost too much. But why is not the problem solved by putting a nickel, or perhaps a dime, into the bottle, making the latter with a neck so small that it has to be broken to obtain possession of the coin?

This has been tried; but it will not do, because people do not want a piece of metal jingling about in a fluid which they are to drink. Perhaps, too, it might under some circumstances affect the stuff chemically. The way out of the difficulty—simple enough when one comes to think of it—consists in blowing the coin into the substance of the bottle. It is certain that, when the bottle is empty, the consumer of the contents will smash the receptacle to get the money, and thus the object is achieved—which is, of course, that nobody shall be able to refill the bottle and sell it as an "original package."

## SUN-SPOTS AND HORSE-CHESTNUTS

THE French astronomer and naturalist Flammarion has recently succeeded, so he says, in establishing a relation between horse-chestnuts and sun-spots. He finds that the leaf-buds burst and the flowers appear on the horse-chestnut trees earlier when the spots on the sun are largest.

When it is considered that a large sun-spot is a gap or chasm in the fiery envelop of the solar orb, which may be one hundred and fifty thousand miles or more in diameter, the claim made to-day that there is a perceptible relation between such spots and certain terrestrial phenomena does not seem unreasonable.

Hence the experiments of Flammarion, who is trying incidentally to find out which of the sun's rays really do the work of growing our fruits and vegetables for us. To this end, he built a number of little greenhouses—one of the ordinary kind, another covered with red glass, yet another of blue glass, still another of green glass, and so on, representing the various hues of the solar spectrum.

In each of these greenhouses he sowed fifty lettuce-plants, and as a result he found that those which grew in the red light spindled up into the air, while those in the blue light and green light developed hardly at all. It was much the same way with other vegetables, the potatoes planted in the red house running to stalks and leaves, while the tubers obtained were hardly bigger than peas.

It was ascertained, however, that ripe strawberries and other fruits could be kept in good condition for many days, and held back from overripening, by placing them under blue glass.

## Lincoln

By James Raymond Perry

To fill a larger time old Nature wrought,  
And made a larger man with larger mind

And larger soul, wherein dwelt larger thought

And love so large it could embrace mankind.